

## **Town Administrator's Report for Selectboard Meeting on November 14, 2016**

**Site visit**—the site visit is at the easterly end of Higbee Road, just past the intersection with Lucy's Lane. (More about the application is below).

**Potential Village Wastewater System policy issues**—a list of policy issues is included in the packet. Dave Marshall will be at the meeting to assist with reviewing the issues.

**Michael and Barbara McGinnis Highway Access Permit application**—The property was subdivided in 2014, and the proposed access was approved by the Selectboard at that time, but the approval expired because the lot was not developed and the access was not constructed. The conditions of approval in 2014 were:

1. The access shall be constructed in the location depicted in the plans submitted with the application.
2. A 24" diameter culvert at least 30 feet in length will be installed in the roadside ditch; **please call the Road Commissioner (425-2223) 48 hours prior to installation.**
3. The new highway access shall be constructed consistent with the Recommended Standards for Access Roads and Driveways adopted by the Charlotte Planning Commission on September 2, 1997.
4. Following the completion of construction of the driveway access, **please call the Road Commissioner (425-2223) and the Town Administrator (425-3071 ext. 5)**, who shall inspect the access to assure proper construction; if the access is constructed properly, they shall sign this permit and submit it for recording by the Town Clerk.
5. This permit will expire two years from its issuance if construction has not commenced.

**Letter to Vermont Transportation Board**—Chris Davis modified the letter, and I made some edits. Following this, Chris suggested a few additional edits, which are included in the packet. The Transportation Board's public forums will be finishing on November 16<sup>th</sup>—so comments should be submitted by the end of the week.

**Grant Agreement with Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation for tree planting in the Charlotte Park & Wildlife Refuge**—The draft grant agreement is included in the packet. Mark Dillenbeck, who wrote the grant application, will be at the meeting to answer any questions.

### **Budget Review—**

- Listers (account group 100-3400)—the Lister Chair has proposed that the Chair perform all day-to-day tasks, and the other Listers would only be used for occasional tasks, e.g. grievances or to approve the grand list. So, the Lister Chair would be the only paid staff; but no additional hours are proposed. This results in a savings of a little over \$8,000.
- Trails Committee (account 100-9000-50.00 under Miscellaneous)—The Committee is proposing a \$500 increase, from \$1,000 to \$1,500. The uses are broken out and described in a memo from the Committee included in the packet. The Committee has recommended keeping the \$5,000 allocation to the Trails Reserve Fund, which is used for "matching funds" that are often required for grants.

- Animal Control Officer (accounts 100-9000-47 & 48 under Miscellaneous)—a specific budget has not been proposed; the worksheet showing last year's "actual" is included in the packet. The Animal Control Officer is paid via a monthly stipend. It appears the cost of bringing dogs to the shelter or Humane Society (paid from Dogs/Miscellaneous) can be variable and not predictable. This line could perhaps be reduced to \$1,000.
- Constable (accounts 100-3300-10.11&12)—a specific budget has not been proposed; the worksheet showing last year's "actual" is included in the packet. The Constable works events such as Halloween and Town Meeting, but has often not submitted time sheets for these events. A discussion could be had as to whether the Constable intends to bill in the coming fiscal year.
- Charlotte Little League (account 100-5100-47.00 under Town Lands)—the Town has paid for mowing and fertilizing the Little League field (near the Charlotte Berry Farm) since FY2003. Chris Boffa, who is the contact for the Little League, has indicated the request would stay at the same level as previously, i.e. \$10,000.
- Conservation Commission (account group 100-7500)—the Conservation Commission has proposed reducing its budget by \$50 from last year. The Commission has also proposed fund-raising through the creation of a special calendar, for which they are requesting an allocation of \$1,500, which would be in addition to the budget.
- Cemetery Commission (account 100-5100-43.00 under Town Lands)—the Cemetery Commission has proposed some repairs and somewhat more meticulous maintenance, for which the budget would increase from \$10,000 to \$29,120. Quotes were obtained to document the requests. The current landscaping contractor charged \$2,200 this year for maintaining the cemeteries; the budget proposes \$6,000 for this task. The Cemetery Fund account currently has a balance of \$3,936. Perhaps some funds from this account plus some fundraising could help to offset the cost of the proposed projects.
- Planning & Zoning (revenue account group 100-2400 and expense account group 100-3200)—the budget proposes slightly reduced revenue of \$53,040 (from \$55,900 in FY17), increases non-staff expenses to \$42,334 (from \$21,800), and reduces staffing expenses to \$82,987 (from \$85,671).

Increased costs for "Engineering-Septic" is a big driver in the increase of the non-staff expense budget. Computers also increased—the budget includes one new computer work-station (\$884—see quote included in packet), a permit records module from NEMRC (\$2,000) and an estimate for migrating data from the existing permit record-keeping program to a new NEMRC program (\$2,500).

The staffing budget proposes 10 additional hours/week each for the Zoning Administrator and the Town Planner, but it does not include any hours for an Administrative Assistant; so it would represent a net reduction in staffing costs.

With regard to the permit records database—zoning permits have been entered into a computer database for about 6-7 years. Older permit data was also entered, so that currently there are over 2,000 permits entered, dating back to the mid 1990's. The current program was created by Robert Turner, a consultant who has done tax-mapping for Charlotte and other towns for many years—however, this program has become "glitchy" to the point where it's not reliable. Planning & Zoning staff has been

researching other programs for several years, and has renewed the research over the past several months. The research has included contacting other towns with permit records programs and several vendors.

NEMRC (New England Municipal Resource Center) has a permit records module; the town (and many if not most towns in Vermont) uses other NEMRC modules for administering the grand list, general ledger, payroll, accounts payable, taxes and Thompson's Point rent. The NEMRC permit module is among the most basic and the least expensive of the programs that were researched. There is a one-time fee of \$1,800, and no annual fees. NEMRC staff estimated a cost of \$2,500 (20 hours @ \$125/hour) to migrate the existing permit data to the NEMRC program. So, although the decision on this does not need to be made immediately, it seemed the quoted costs would be appropriate for budgeting purposes.

**Proposed changes to Planning & Zoning Staff's Approved Hours**—The approved budget for the Planning & Zoning Office is based the Zoning Administrator at 25 hours/week, the Town Planner at 30 hours/week, and an Administrative Assistant at 20 hours/week. The Administrative Assistant position has not been filled; so the Zoning Administrator and Town Planner are covering administrative tasks, and doing fairly well, but there are some permit review tasks that are not occurring within the desired time-frame. Zoning Board members, in particular, have voiced some concern about this.

The Town Planner has averaged 34.5 hours/week since July 1<sup>st</sup>—so the change to 35 hours/week really just reflects the current actual workweek. It won't affect the town's share of the cost of health insurance benefits (for approved hours of 30/week or more, the town pays 90% of the BCBSVT Silver CDHP plan), but it would allow "leave hours" to accrue at a rate that more accurately reflects actual hours worked.

The addition of hours for the Zoning Administrator would allow the ZA to assume some tasks currently handled by the Town Planner, which would free up the Town Planner for permit review. The current Zoning Administrator does not obtain health insurance through the town, so there would be no additional costs related to health benefits due to the increase of hours.

**Thorp Barn repair**—Jenny Cole's e-mail included in the packet explains the situation. Out of four contractors contacted, only Denton Construction provided a quote. Denton Construction did repair work previously on the Town Hall, which was felt to be of good quality. The Thorp Barn Account currently has a balance of \$7,506.

**Documents for Hinsdale/Preston project**—The Selectboard approved spending \$90,000 from the town Conservation Fund for the Hinsdale/Preston conservation project with a condition that a trail easement be executed. A draft Trail Easement document has been provided by the Vermont Land Trust. The purpose of this agenda item is to get authorization for the town attorney to review the easement and the Grant of Executory Interest (which gives the town the authority to enforce the conservation easement if the Vermont Land Trust ceases to enforce the easement and fails to find another organization to do so).